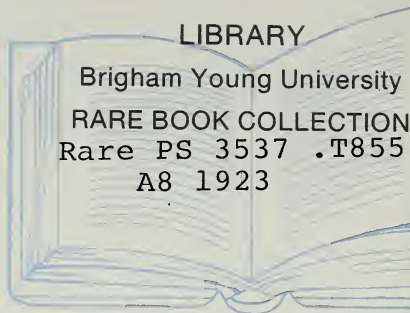


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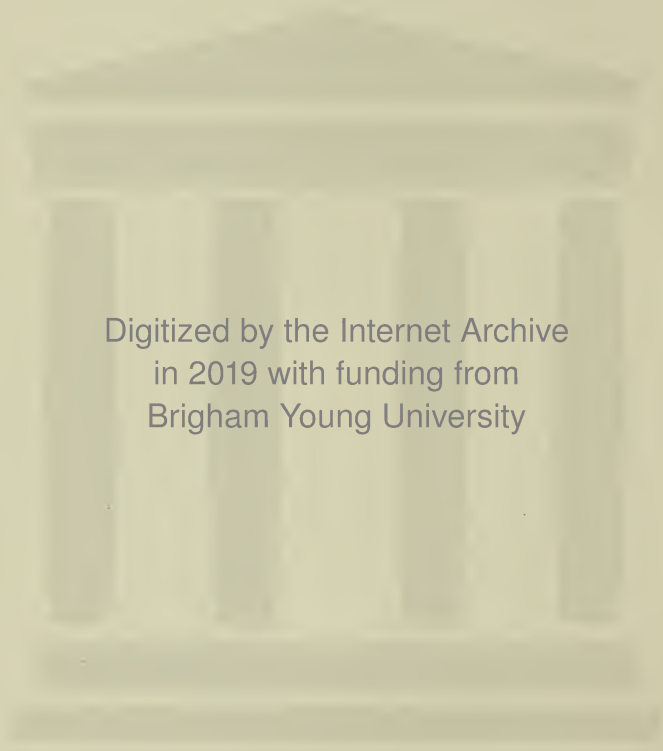


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AT THE ROOTS
OF
GRASSES



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At the Roots of Grasses

By

Muriel Strobe

*Author of "A Soul's Faring"; "My Little Book of Prayer";
"God of Desecrated Beauty," etc.*



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AT THE ROOTS OF GRASSES

AT THE ROOTS OF GRASSES

I

I DO not incline my ear at the door of tombs
— I listen at the roots of grasses.
I do not question dusty tomes — I ask the stars.
Parchment has no meaning to me — I ask my
living, quivering breath.

AT THE ROOTS OF GRASSES

II

I COME from the workshop of creation with
inside secrets.

I know how they made bluebells blue,
Where they got the discs for peacocks;
Who designed the azalea, and where they got
the locust's breath.

I know why they set whippoorwills in the twi-
light — about threnodies and moonsheen.

I am a mixer of vats, an inspector of looms.

I know why they opened the day with coral and
closed it with crimson, and set a blue
canopy between.

I know confidential things — I watched and I
listened.

I saw them moving great jars of ochre and
green,

I saw vats where bird-songs were brewed.

I saw the seasons come out of the molding room.
I know the admixture. I know what they
contain.

AT THE ROOTS OF GRASSES

III

I COME from labyrinths of confusion into a
path across a meadow.

I ease the stress, I come to the ministry of the
trees.

I cease from hurrying and come with the leisure
of flowers, lingering with the loitering
grasses.

I come deliberately, like buds that do not clamor
to open, like fruits that do not hasten to
fall.

AT THE ROOTS OF GRASSES

IV

YOU ask credentials?

There's a pine on the top of the hill
that knows me like a brother.

There's not a bypath but knows my daily way.
The fields exude welcome as I pass, the stream
chortles as I near, the grasses embrace my
feet.

The trees incline with gentle whisperings and
graze with their soft leaves my cheek.
The plowboy stops to call me friend.

AT THE ROOTS OF GRASSES

V

I AM coming the upward route, the hill road.
I am leaning hard on my staff, my mountain boots are torn — but I am coming,
I am on the far, high ledge.
I am coming with a spray of kinnikinnic in my mountain coat, and the autumn colors in my mountain soul.

VI

I SAW only the blossoms on the water's breast
— I did not see the black ooze mud
from which they had sprung.

I saw only the blossoms of a life — I did not
know the mire from which they had come,
how sin, in the end, had blossomed as a
rose — had borne white water-lilies on its
breast.

AT THE ROOTS OF GRASSES

VII

TO have looked a thousand times to the hills,
yet never to have encompassed them;
To have looked into a thousand sunsets in-
sensitive;
And unmoved upon the moon-cold plains at
night;
To have gazed at the myriad stars without a
thrill —
And then to have complained of the paucity of
life!

AT THE ROOTS OF GRASSES

VIII

KEEP me true to the trees, faithful to the
 grasses,

Let me not traduce the birds, betray the faith
 of the roses, nor hurt the heart of the
 daffodils.

Let me not turn my head from the nodding
 white clover.

Keep me fit for stars and twilights, answering
 to the blue night-shadows.

Set me free to be caressed of the sunshine and
 embraced of the breeze.

AT THE ROOTS OF GRASSES

IX

I SMELL the resurrection in the new green
grass,
I sniff my everlasting life in the bursting lilac
buds,
And come upon the scent of my immortality in
the burst of spring.

AT THE ROOTS OF GRASSES

X

I COME for human guidance to the roses, for
wisdom to the daisies of the field,
Calling upon the hills to show me the way.
Asking the breeze to be patient with my human
frailty.

AT THE ROOTS OF GRASSES

XI

TO live where the hills have left deep in-
denture in my life,
Where forests have left their eternal depths and
green,
Where the swish of waters has washed a sandy
shore.
To have the stalwart soul of the open,
Speaking words of granite, and living long days
of pine and spruce.

AT THE ROOTS OF GRASSES

XII

GOD of the oriole's yellow breast, of the
eagle's talon and spread of wing, of
the bluebird's blue and the tanager's crim-
son, show me uses and fitness.

Let me find complement in my own brown soul.

Let me abide by it as the violet does by its
purple, and believe in it as the rose must
believe in its fragrance and hue.

AT THE ROOTS OF GRASSES

XIII

ONCE I came in the terms of pots and pans,
in the dun-color of soulless moiling.
Now I come in the terms of dahlias, and hepaticas,
in a happy garden. My spade
chortles, the poppies flaunt their red skirts
of abandon.

I hang laughing vines over my garden wall, and
have planted a purple grape that climbs up
and kisses the red-cheeked cherries in my
trees.

AT THE ROOTS OF GRASSES

XIV

I AM not a blade of grass — I am all the grass.
I am not a tree — I am the forest.

I am not a star — but all the stars in the firmament.

I am not a human being — I am the multitudes
that walk the earth. I am the universal
— all.

I am a traveler on the great highway, friend
to the elements, brother to the calm and
the storm, neighbor to the night and the
day, to the stars and the sun.

AT THE ROOTS OF GRASSES

XV

I DO not utter littlenesses — I speak a skyline or an ant-hill.

I speak big things, that measure up to big trees and little grasses; great things, like God and daffodils; stupendous things, like ages and a moment.

AT THE ROOTS OF GRASSES

XVI

YOU say " O holy nun," and I say " O holy titmouse."

You say " O sacred temple," and I say " O sacred walls of the sky."

You say " God's chosen," and I say " There are none other."

You say " One sublime moment," and I say " O sublime foreverness! "

You say " A consecrate soul," and I say " A consecrate creation."

You say " God enter into me," and I say " You cannot keep Him out."

XVII

I SPEAK the language of ants and beetles,
The bats tell me their cares,
The snake, crushed of the heel, crawls wearily,
over to me.
The lark with the broken wing knows that I
know why it cannot sing.
I hear the plaint of the shattered wheel, bemoan-
ing the load it cannot bear.
I know what the gate is saying on its broken
hinge.
I speak a common language with defeat and
contumely —
The Mother Tongue of Pain.

AT THE ROOTS OF GRASSES

XVIII

I am odorous of the pine forest,
The scent of pine-cones is in my hair.
I smell of wild mint, and the tamarack swamps.
The juice of alder-berries is on my lips, and
the brown stain of hazel on my fingers.
I am flecked with the dust of moth-wings, and
powdered with the pollen from the hearts
of calla-lilies.
I am wind-tawnd and sun-brownd.
Wearing the marks of the open.
I reek of freedom.

AT THE ROOTS OF GRASSES

XIX

I TASTE like my garden, I am herbs, and
spikenard, and mignonette.

I am the flavor of the vine on the eaves, the
savor of my trees.

I have sipped my garden's honey until, like the
bees, I am sweetened, carrying great sacs
of honey-dew.

I am fragrant like peach-blossoms, and the
color of a dawn in the dome of a shell.

I am clinging and familiar like the grasses about
my feet.

I kiss your strange lips with the boldness of
my butterflies — drinking you as they drink
my clover.

AT THE ROOTS OF GRASSES

XX

I BRING you bunches of laughing hoyden,
and clusters of myself gathered from
the star-grass.

I dig myself up with roots and herbs.

And give you myself torn from the stakes of
fences.

It is the taste of me in the tang of the air.

XXI

I PUT into life the bursting leaf-buds, and
the wisp of straw that the bird let fall
from its new-made nest.

I tear life out of me,
And wind it around and around about me like
the threads of a cocoon.

I burrow in it like the ground mole,
And cleave it like the birds the air.

I taste it, I drink it like famished beasts.
I walk in it like bare feet in lush grasses,
And sleep pressed close to its cheek.

AT THE ROOTS OF GRASSES

XXII

I WALK on twilight grasses and tread the
rushes where the ground is wet with
ooze.

I come through the underbrush, peering, and
make a path through the fields, searching
ever.

By the wild arbutus I stop, I pause by the
water's edge.

I am searching for myself, with the faith that
I shall one day be rewarded.

AT THE ROOTS OF GRASSES

XXIII

SO long as the trees seem friendly,
So long as the green grass speaks to me,
So long as I seem of the flowers a part,
So long as the Great Universal Heart does not
exclude me!

XXIV

GOD, must I pass clumsily back to you in
the end?

May I not come at last in a beauteous finale? —

Like lithesome trees,

Like shadows over the wheat,

Like swaying breezes in the corn?

Must I come unwieldly into the Presence,

Unclaiming of grace?

Never having come upon the lilt of the chord
that plays in the tops of swinging trees?

AT THE ROOTS OF GRASSES

XXV

THE trees are waiting to save me, the grass
is at prayer,
The lilies lift up their chalice,
The roses fling their petals on the altar, the
winds are a God-intoning.
Nature is my evangelist, exhorting me to Him.

XXVI

I WILL find my way!

The birds have not chart of the skies, nor
the fishes the paths of the sea.

Time rolls to no man's determining, and none
pilot the moon across the heavens.

I will find my way!

The winds are not leashed to a blowing,
The seasons arrive in undirection, and the moles
bore on in their unseeing — and I am not
less —

I will find my way!

AT THE ROOTS OF GRASSES

XXVII

I WILL arrive at last, through silks and fine
laces, at voluntary huckaback.

Through many feastings, down through the corridors of many festal halls, I will come at last to the bowl of berries and dew.

I will arrive at the simple things of the spirit, at the religion of hemp and sandals.

I will find the God that conceals Himself in a coarse crust, the divinity that lies in a thatched roof and slab walls.

XXVIII

GOD possess me!

Express through me as through the hues
of your flowers, the songs of your
starlings.

Vest me with brilliant hues, or with carols.

Let me be some color of your soul, some sound
of your uttering.

Let me be some rapture of you, some uttered
ecstasy,

Like sap thrilling through trees, or stars rising
to perihelion;

Like waves lapping the feet of cliffs, or fledglings
pressed close to a breast;

Like azaleas opening, or moon-flowers thrown
purple against a blue night.

AT THE ROOTS OF GRASSES

XXIX

I COME in the great unfear, asking nothing,
yet assured.

God's gardens are kind,
The wild berries are succulent and sweet,
The herbs are a restorative,
The moss is like a feather pillow.

AT THE ROOTS OF GRASSES

XXX

I AM the urge that sends the sap upward,
the impulse in the throat of the bird,
the thrill of its wing.

I am the desire that exudes the finch's color,
the yearning that makes it golden-hued.

I am the demand that crimsones the sumac, the
assertion that flaunts itself in the tops of
frost-touched trees.

AT THE ROOTS OF GRASSES

XXXI

I COME singing through the fields,
Touching the hawthorne buds with my
glad lips,
Leaning to the bluebells,
Reaching with my shining laughter to salute
the trees.

AT THE ROOTS OF GRASSES

XXXII

LIFE is a moan, and I compel it into a
threnody —

The pain mixed with the light and the music.

RED THREADS OF MY HEART

RED THREADS OF MY HEART

I

I AM the spinner of dream,
Weaving from the webs of yearning.
Weaving from the fragile reel that holds the
fine red threads of my heart.

RED THREADS OF MY HEART

II

ONE day you will pour over me like a
floodtide to the barrenness and the
thirst of me,
And I shall drink great seas of you.
I shall lave in you to the utmost appeasing.
I shall swim the currents of you with the long,
strong strokes of the swimmer who cleaves
his way to his own rescue.

III

THE announcer cried "The prince is at
the gate!" —

But I waited and wept.

How could the prince know a goose-girl,

In her goose-girl garments?

I had not fabric of a prince,

I had not soul of a dream.

IV

ONE day the purple hour will present, and
I shall be ready —
I who have long prepared,
I who have woven the garlands for my hair,
And the white, shimmering loveliness for my
shoulders.
I shall come with great chests of readiness,
Wrought in my eager leaning toward the day.

RED THREADS OF MY HEART

V

I STIFLE my heart, and awake in the night
to hear it moaning.

That it wears sackcloth shall not annul its
golden fleece.

The sybarite of me shall know its appease.

RED THREADS OF MY HEART

VI

I AM the gentle dreamer,
Weaving in and out a warp of the moon
with a woof of the mist,
Fine wrought threads of gauze, with filament
of dew,
Strands of fairy tresses enwoven with a blue
shimmering, like a grotto's evening.

VII

SOMEWHERE my dream awaits me —
It matters not that I had the wrong personnel.

Maybe I called it Hyacinth, when it was Star-drift;

Maybe I called it the East Wind, when it was the Moonmist.

RED THREADS OF MY HEART

VIII

I AM mother to the maimed child of you,
I hold you pressed to my fond breast, and
whisper my soft secrets.

The darker the hour, the closer I hold your
hand,

The harder the way, the farther I go with you.
you.

I am the pool of tears,
I am the pain that laughs.

IX

I SUPPLY that that rests and comforts,
I hold tired, trembling hands in assurance.
I am the homing hearth to the outcast heart.
I am there in the lonely night on the plains —
You will know me by a sign that cannot be
taught,
And by a word that only you can interpret.

RED THREADS OF MY HEART

X

I AM the homing heart sent to roam,
Seeing romping children only through a
gate,
And hearing a mother's twilight singing across
a casement.

I am the vagrant, seeing only by glints through
a window,
Pressing my ear close at the sound of a lullaby,
Straining my vagrant eyes at the sight of a
mother's bare breast.

XI

I AM your sufficient love,
Wildering to the forest of you.
My lips are the flavor of tamarack.
I am the taste that has stalked like a specter
through your senses,
The crush of wild fruit that you came upon in
the wilderness of you.

XII

I DIP my long fingers into the ineffable meaning and trail them over the burning of you.

I allay by great, cool, swaddling draughts of me.

I am life's febrifuge, —

I assuage the fever.

My fingers are like wet drippings from ferns in damp, cool woods.

XIII

I STRIKE the crystal wisps of your being.
Playing upon the fine spun chords of frail
sound.

You are the harp of web, and I am the gentle-
ness of dream fingers.

I sweep you like phantom winds that touch the
fragile edge of leaves,

Commanding their delicate gossamer music.

XIV

I AM your soul's healing — lover to your
human lips.

I am the finite quench to the infinite thirst,
The flesh-appease to the God-longing.

I am the earth that fulfills heaven,
The human that fulfills the divine.

XV

SO far away it is — that day. So far I have
wandered,
It is so far back to the fields and the paths that
lead down to them,
I have come such a long, long journey thence.
It is so far back to the bluebells and the stream.

XVI

I BRING you the purple embroideries wrought
in the black Pentecost of my pain.

I bring you all that life missed and lay it at
your feet like friendly grasses.

I bring the tenderness that speaks your name
fondly.

I bring the atonement and the reparation, an-
nulling the world experience.

I re-establish the Great Heart, I re-affirm the
Great Potency.

All that was withheld I bring,
Seed to the barren fields, and birds to the restive
trees;

Flocks to the bare hills, and lovers to the moon-
light.

XVII

MY arms are the surcease, the press of my
breast the suage.

Only I can comfort him — I who missed the
comfort. Only the starved know.

Let none other come with halfness — only I
can bring the full appease.

Only I have the savor that was long denied
him —

The flavor of his unkept past is in me.

I bring the taste of that that was meant.

I am a haunting fragrance, like ambergris blown
from the sea.

I burn like a peat fire with long seasoning.

XVIII

I AM the theme that has long been playing
through your years —
Sometimes in the clarion of bugles blown from
high hills on frosty mornings,
Sometimes like martial music, like drums rolling,
Sometimes like bells ringing over the sea.
I am that recurrent, insistent thing,
Calling you in dreams,
Beckoning you in visions,
Stalking you through the days like a phantom
cadence.
When the winds blow, I am the harps in the
trees;
When the waves beat I am the bell-buoys,
When the night sweeps over the grasses, I am
the crystal tinkling of the dew.

XIX

COME in, my love, out of the obscurity, in
from the trailless wanderings.

I am the path, I am the hand beckoning you,
I am the assurer.

I keep the accounts of life, and I pay.

I keep the covenants — the promise you made
to yourself I keep.

XX

I BRING you in from the poetry of granite
monoliths, and tell you not to forget
the poetry of the stars.

I bring you in from the singing streets, and
tell you not to forget the by-paths and
the meadows.

I see you creating a kingdom, and I hold you
fast to Him who creates the roses and the
dew.

XXI

I BRING you nights that are bathed in blue
moonlight,

And ponds of lilies under the stars' gleam.

I bring you the white joy of being, and the
purple glory.

I bring you back the croonings and the caress,
And in from wanderings from home and human-
ness.

I bring you to the soft white flowers, the sacred
sweets.

I am the suppliant of your starved life, the
beggar of the bread that sustains you,

I have carried far the quench.

XXII

I COMMAND you out of March winds, into
 Aprils and Junes,
From the desolate sougning of winter boughs,
 into summer nights and days,
From alleys where pestilence stalks, into a
 wilderness of crab-apple bloom.

I fulfill the unspoken word of you, the want,
 the sparsity,

Out of labor-pains I bring a new-born wonder.
I release you from the authority of nights and
 days, and bring you only the consciousness
 that a night and a day make life.

I release you from consistency, and bring you
 to stand on the thing as it is.

I bring you the knowledge that God is a color-
 ist, and strings His beads harmoniously.

So long you have lain sleeping by the garden
 wall —

I restore you by a breath of daffodils blown
 from meadows —

All this in the youth of your days.

XXIII

I BRING you again in the faith of youth, and
its zest,
Into a new credulity,
Believing in fairies, and the pot of gold at the
rainbow's end.
I bring you once more wistfully longing for the
things that lie over the hill —
Once more challenging life, throwing down the
gauntlet,
Bold in youth's boldness,
Reckless in its unfear.
I bring you a new intensity, a recharging of
power,
A new urge of being, like the rise of sap in the
trees in the spring,
A new bursting forth, like quickened leaves and
buoyant branches.

XXIV

I AM the high, white shining on far hills,
The iridescence that burnishes you,
The silver shimmering of waters,
The blue irradiance of June moons.
I am the slender myth of your dreams, the
thing your youth projected —
That that was born in your fire and your
yearning,
The slender white radiance that enchanted you.
I am that maiden come into motherhood,
And you that youth-man seeking my mother
arms,
Seeking the lost lullaby,
Following the crystal wisps of a phantom
crooning.

XXV

MINE is the Wailing Wall.
I come to the impenetrableness and
lift my soul in moaning.
I beat my breast with stones, until my foot-
prints are red and moist.
Mine is the Wailing Wall,
The end of the knowing,
The granite silence.

RED THREADS OF MY HEART

XXVI

I AM the self-accused, I moan in my sleep,
My restless couch is the broken bits of
the sharp edge of the day.
I moan when the moon falls across my pillow,
It is my heart that breaks, that weeps when
the birds spill their songs over the world,
and sobs in the roses.

XXVII

OH, my love, my love, the day grows late,
my eyes grow dim,
The years are passing, the fires are banked
and low,
The pale grey of afternoon approaches,
The lavender twilight threatens me.

Oh, my love, my love, the moonmoth beats its
wings, seeking the consuming flame,
Seeking the sweet exotic flame, that will sear
it, and scar it, and burn it to ash,
Perishing in love's ecstasy,
The suttee bride of a consummation, of a thing
achieved.

XXVIII

I MOAN at the water's edge at night,
And press my heart to the pond-lilies,
Calling my lover's name.
I hear the answer of the moonlight, and the
birds chirping in the trees.
I hear him call to me out of the lone wind,
And his swift unwilling feet go speeding by.
I reach my hand to touch the edge of his
garment,
And my heart to touch the edge of his grief.

XXIX

I AM your love, fair as the breasts of doves.
Your eyes shall look long upon me,
My fragrant flesh shall enchant you.
I am spikenard and myrrh, as the incense of
the temple I am to you.
My eyes are as brown as the beechnuts in
the fall,
My breasts are soft as the velvet of roses, and
warm as a tear.
I walk enchanted ways, and whoso walks with
me walks to his frenzy —
I afflict like the moon.
I am your love,
I walk with you in the night past starlit
streams,
Past the acacia blossoms where love swoons.

RED THREADS OF MY HEART

XXX

MY eyes are like soft twilights, meltings of
silver and blue,

My lips are the stain of wild crushed fruit,

My breath is jasmine.

My fragrant body is more sweet than attar
vases,

My fingers a velvet caress.

My arms are like the foam-white arms of the
sea.

My love is as moonlight to the shadows,

My comfort like the listening soul of the night
to the song of the whippoorwill.

My silence is a stream of melody,

And my words like silver-white etchings along
the edge of the gloom-black sky.

RED THREADS OF MY HEART

XXXI

I AM the wayfaring birds flying over your
days,
Dropping the seed from their beaks.
I fructify your fields, your dying flowers lift
up their heads.

RED THREADS OF MY HEART

XXXII

I AM braiding oakum with my long, strong
fingers,
But my soul is braiding filament,
Caught from the strands of stars.
My flesh is tawny and hard — a world product,
But there is an unseen of me,
Like gauze of gold that fairies spin.

XXXIII

I AM sifting ashes, —
And you do not know that I am also
sifting my dreams.
You see only Cinderella, the ash-girl,
But I see the bride of the prince.

XXXIV

I POSSESS you, I burn my idiograph upon
you,
I diffuse you into the streams of me,
I melt you like moonlight, and pour you like
moonlight over my garden.
You are the fluid song of the lark, and I pour
you through the channels of me.
You are the mingling of fragrance and dew,
and I cover me with a blanket of you,
Like a sense delirium.

XXXV

COME to me, O my driven one —
I am an idling afternoon, the droning
of bees, the dipping of honeysuckle.
I am white clover meadows beckoning you,
And poppy-fields lulling you.
Come to me out of the confusion —
I am the endless faith.
I rescue you from your own misgivings,
I prove beauty by myself.

XXXVI

YOU are the crimson of my breast, the
potency of my wing.

You are the long deep currents that I drink
when I sail the sky.

You are the thing I see when my breath comes
quick and eager —

The panting breath of a concept.

RED THREADS OF MY HEART

XXXVII

I AM life's great One Lover,
Making all life's pain welcome and
and sweet.

I cleanse you of life,

Purify you of too much living.

I am caravan to the desert where a traveler
is lost,

Come to lead you back to your own land and
kin.

XXXVIII

I TRANSPLANT you in my garden,
I water you with liquid ecstasy from
the nightingale's breast,
And fertilize you with the souls of dead lilies.
I sweeten the mold of you with sacs torn from
under the legs of bees.

XXXIX

I AM the Sufficient One,
Amplifier, rainmaker to deserts.
I deliver you from life's wastes, from the dearth
of living and loving.
I prove by the excess of me.
I am the pathfinder — through me you know
the way.

XL

HE is somewhere in God's garden,
Somewhere with his sleeves rolled up
and his chest bare.
Somewhere he lifts his face to the sky and
smiles.

I saw him once, but I could not halloo him —
He was so far away.
I could not speak his name —
I of the lowlands did not know the language
of his hills.

XLI

MY love is coming, but he is delayed —
Delayed by my own unprepared-
ness.

He is on the high plateau of his soul, but I am
coming up from the moorland.

One day I shall meet him on the high horizon
of his loftiest appeal,

In the uplands' of his life I shall come upon
him.

XLII

I CONSECRATE you —

I bring you to the incense of flowers,
To the tapers of tall, white lilies,
To brodered altar-cloths of dahlias and mi-
gnonette,
Into the chanting of trees, and the litanies of
streams.
You kneel on a living altar rug of grasses, and
send your message over the breeze.

MUCH IN A BASKET

MUCH IN A BASKET

I

I HAVE much in a basket, and I bring it you,
there under the tired stars —

A few nasturtiums, a lark's fluttering breast, a
purple thistle-flower, the blossoms of
night, like eucalyptus leaves.

I have much in a basket — the feel of moss on
a hill, a breath of resin from the height.

I have much in a basket —
Releasement, and I bring it you.

MUCH IN A BASKET

II

YOU are dying of sordidness — and I pull
back a curtain and show you the
coral pepper trees.

You are sick of weeds — and I bring you rose
gardens.

You are grimed with earth's dust — and I
bring you the dust of stars.

You have brought the bread out of your moil-
ing — and I bring you the gleam.

III

THERE are enough to drive you — I come
to rest you, to bring the assuage.
I sing to you gayly — there are no longer sobs
in your roses.
I mend your lark's broken wing.

There are enough to harness you to the fur-
row — I give you the unrestrained things
of the hedge-rows — the birds, and the
morning-glories.

There are enough to bind you to the earth —
I cut the thongs and make you a thing
of wings.

I lift your day with the heft of a song in the
evening shadows.

MUCH IN A BASKET

IV

I MAY not teach you how to dig your ditches,
but a wild rose trailing over an embankment may teach you.

I myself may not know how to illumine the
drab day, but a firefly in the gloaming may
know.

V

I BRING you beauty whose only use is
beauty —

You cannot ride it, you cannot hitch it to your
cart like mares.

It soars and sings — you cannot harvest it for
your garner, nor sell it in the mart —

There is no market quotation on gossamer
wings and ecstasy.

MUCH IN A BASKET

VI

I MARCH down life like June roses en-
tourage,
Like a processional of red trumpet flowers,
Like phalanxes of lavender azaleas.

I arrive like a ripe wheat field,
Like purple vineyards in the harvest frost,
Like golden-rod in its mature beauty, ripening
along the edge of an autumn day.

I fulfill my beauty mission,
Proclaiming my source in rapture, and my
ecstatic release.

VII

I DO not give you dolingly, grudgingly, counting the drops —

I open the sluice-gates and let the floods pour down upon you.

What matter your weakness, if you have visions of your strength?

What matter the desert — I shall cover it with green things growing out of me.

MUCH IN A BASKET

VIII

THEY may destroy your rose gardens, but
no harm has been done, so that they
have not destroyed your urge for roses.

IX

I COME clean like moon-milk that runs from
the blue troughs of the sky,

Spilling over the world;

As light as the upturned bowls of foam on a
wild, night sea.

The sprites that dance on the thin edge of
lily-bells come only as I — in the delicate
music of their frail beauty.

I am one with the gossamer sounds that sweep
up and down the web of the wind.

The tiny tinkling of the glass balls of the mist
but strikes the key of me.

I am the ruby vibrations of the humbird's
breast,

The gauze voice of bees' wings.

I am dual identity,
Beauty repeating beauty —
All is replica in me.

MUCH IN A BASKET

X

I WILL come into use — the use of roses, or
the use of bread.

If I may not cultivate a field or a garden, then
maybe a sunset or a mountain view.

If I may not grow grain, then maybe I can
grow gladness.

If not flax for its fibre, then maybe smilax for
its wondrous breath.

XI

I ASK no special dispensation — it is so much
to come in the common weal.

I do not ask to be set apart — if only I may
be included!

MUCH IN A BASKET

XII

IF one could but buy freedom with golden
autumn leaves — could but pile them
high and high for the soul's release!

What is the price of cool, green grass against
my unrestricted feet?

What is the mileage to horizons?

How much minted gold for unleashment?

XIII

I AM going back one day and drink great draughts of the places of my thirst — Great bowls of hill, and stream, and meadow, Great tankards of oak and hickory trees.

I am going to drink a long, long quench to the thirst that has burned in memory.

I am going to pour to a desert of longing that reaches its white sands back into the youth years of me.

MUCH IN A BASKET

XIV

GOD, set me free with dragon-flies, and
wasps, and dusty-millers,
Unclaimed, unespoused, but free!
Without apparent reason or intent, but space-
things,
Denied, protested, but living their wings.
Out of their ugliness and disclaiming, sailing
down long shafts of light to an ultimate
reunion with Him.

Let me but grasp half so much of life as des-
pised things, as purslane, and mullen, and
wort,
Growing there in their God-corner, unmindful
of the world's disdain,
Eating the clean earth with their roots,
Drinking the light with their leaves —
God-things of opprobrium — but God's!

XV

I AM as gorgeous as the dawn — and as
humble.

I come to you in my native splendor, but my
proud heart is peasant, not potentate.

I walk crimsoned ways, like highways down
sunsets, but the mantle on my unseen
shoulders is like a grey drape of vapor.

My day is resplendent, my night is split into
myriads of prism-gleams, but I walk the
trail of the hours in a cassock like brown
autumn leaves.

XVI

YOU own the harvest — but the moon that
matures it belongs to me.

The trees are yours — but the stars that nestle
in the tops of them are mine.

You own the roses — but not the butterflies,
Yours the clover — but you have no fee in the
bumble-bees.

You own the path — but mine the sauntering.
You claim the stream — but to my heart its
gurgling,

Yours the daisies — but they nod to me!

XVII

I HAVE not more apprehension than the
stars,
Nor more fear than the orchards.
The sun meets the day without misgiving,
The winds trust to their listing, the birds to
their song,
The bluebell rests confident in its blue.
The beasts are sanguine, whatever the day or
the fortune —
And I, too, have partaken of Him.
Not inanimate things shall have more of this
God than I,
Not dumb things shall shame me.

XVIII

I ALIGN myself with the God of Process-
ment, and deal with you as He deals with
His finals.

I do not see you out of a day — I see you in
the strata of time.

I do not see you as a leaf, but as the coal
deposits.

Layer upon layer I will accumulate you,
Cycle upon cycle you shall accrue.

I do not define you out of the hour — I give you
the definition of a million years.

XIX

KEEP me in rectitude, God,
Too proud to falter,
Too zealous of the aristocrat in my high, fine
soul.
As unyielding as cliffs,
As unpliant as boulders,
Yet soft as the mist drapes of the evening.

MUCH IN A BASKET

XX

MAYBE I shall come one day to live simply
and hoe beans.

Maybe I shall cast off the trappings and come
shorn into a simple field.

Under this accretion of life I may find God and
myself.

Under this debris of living I may find my brother
and the trees.

XXI

GOD of desecrated beauty,
Of strangled starlings and bruised
roses,

Of wings torn from purple moths,
And ruby throats from slain humbirds —
God, how shall I wash me clean of the stain?
My hands are flecked with the dust of crushed
gauze wings,
My fingers are stained with the red of a tiny
fluttering.

You gave me beauty, God,
And I set her to clean the styes and the stables.
You entrusted her to my faithful keeping —
And the sheen of her hair is black with grime,
And the milk of her skin is haggish, like a be-
draggled thing.

You set me to tend fonts where beauty flows —
And I but scour the sewers.
You made me keeper of the tops of trees —
master of wind rhythms —
And I but beat a harsh flail on the broken brass
of a day.

XXII

I AM the unillumined clod, but one day you
will see iris and calla-lilies out of the
dullness of me.

Out of my colorlessness you will see vivid
flashes, like the breasts of tropic birds.

Out of my dun hue you will see crimson salvia,
and lavender dahlia, like banks of evening
haze.

You will see nasturtium beds, like Bedouin
blankets, and blue-white heather, like the
mist in a maiden's hair —

Out from the dun-colored soul of me, into my
brilliant acclaim!

XXIII

I AM the Great Restorer —
I set you out into the Open Foreverness,
and heal you with the sun, and the wind
and the arch of the sky.

SONGS OF LONGING

SONGS OF LONGING

SOMEWHERE there is warmth for me, there
are summer suns, and warm sands for
my feet, some place where the winds do
not sting, some place where my lambs are
not always dead — some warm country.
And there is road to it — by the sacrificial blood
of me poured on the altar of my appeal.
And I have set out to prove. I will compel my
life. I will make it ashamed of its un-
meaning.

SONGS OF LONGING

ONE day I shall come from far seeking with
tales of the buried treasure.

I look away to the distance and wonder what
herbs of healing are growing on the far
hills.

SONGS OF LONGING

ONE day I shall come out of the turmoil
and pray some placid prayer of ease-
ment.

I shall reach down through the turbulence to
the sub-seas of serenity.

I shall pray the prayer of quiet's attainment,
the achievement of stillness.

I shall attain power's infriktion of being, and
come with noiseless turnings, like the silent
worlds, with pourings like the soundless,
unclamoring seasons.

SONGS OF LONGING

IT is a long way back, a long way back, to
simplicity, back to the vision with the
sun shining upon it, back to my simple
soul.

SONGS OF LONGING

MY wants are the wants of the world.
My pain is the pain of everyone who
has suffered and died in vain.
I am every struggler there is. I am every heart
that breaks.

SONGS OF LONGING

THIS consuming yearning is not the end.
I must appease, either with the thing,
or with the great unneed.

SONGS OF LONGING

I

I AM the cry of the nebula to become a star,
the stream following its dream to the sea.
I am the ovum, with consciousness of the Bird
of Paradise.
I am the moment of time calling to infinity.

SONGS OF LONGING

II

ONCE I despaired that I was the despised
unloveliness under your heel. Now I
know that worms have a blue and golden
beauty enfolded — and wings.

I, the despised, the trodden-under-foot dream
a long, long dream!

III

THE will to live! — Dare one crave so
much?

To live yearning — and to die yearning still.

Never to have abandoned the thing.

To believe in the fairy prince to the end of the
day and the end of the way.

To carry into age the zest and faith of youth.

To believe with an ever new credulity in the
pot of gold at the rainbow's end.

To believe in the things that lie over the hill.

To die in the white and the lavender, clinging
to the faith of the blue and the gold.

To die buoyantly — to the end on winged feet!

SONGS OF LONGING

IV

I AM the Magdalene, kneeling here in my
tears.

I wash His feet with the long penitent strands
of my hair.

I belong to the Brotherhood of the Unworthy.
It is so far, so far, to grace, and I have
come such a little way.

V

LIFE may break my body and my days —
and my soul may laugh at her impotency.

She may destroy me, and I may go laughing
over the hills. A few hours mutilated, and
eternity lies in the residuum.

She may mar the realities, but what of my
dreams!

SONGS OF LONGING

VI

LET me comprehend the plan. If I have wanted to be violet, it was because I had not realization of the rose struggling within me.

If I have wanted to be swan, it was because I did not have consciousness of the night-ingale that gripped my aching throat of song.

Let me not envy you your gorgeous plumage, if I may be the brown breast that I am, but let me not be half a brown breast, and half a longing.

VII

I REACH out with my heaven-longing — and
God lays His beautiful world in my out-
stretched arms.

I reach out with the aching heart of me — and
God presses infinity to my yearning breast.

I ask for human comfort — and God himself
sustains me.

I ask for God-comfort — and He sends the
touch of human hands.

SONGS OF LONGING

VIII

I AM God's poet and His blacksmith, His
scullion and His weaver of star-strands
into golden rope.

One day maybe I shall see the consistency. I
shall know how one was the complement
of the other, how I was made whole by the
presence of each.

IX

SOMEWHERE in life's attic, in life's remote corner, some one is working as he prays.

Someone is toiling, and bit by bit the gyves are growing thin, and one day he will emerge, with the rended shackles of you and of me — a Christ to save us from ourselves.

SONGS OF LONGING

X

I HAVE promised my wings, my long, strong
wings, my tragic wings!

I have looked upon the limited unfold of me,
and I have promised to unfurl the
heavens.

I have looked upon my palsied reach, and I
have made oath to put my arms around
the universe, to embrace all that is.
Height that has been but the measure of
my ceiling shall be known by its stars.
Breadth that was but a pace from wall
to wall shall hang from the rim of hills.

XI

GOD of my unspoken life, of my dumb
throat and my mute lips — How
long, God, did you agonize, before the
atoms became a tangibility? How long
before the mist condensed and ran in rivers
to the sea?

Is this the kindergarten of being, God, and shall
I yet emerge into grownupness?

Will this wraith thing of me bear only phantom
fruit, or shall I come into the flesh and
blood and bone of the reality of me?

Shall I pluck only purple clusters from out the
blue night-shadows, and never find my
vineyards on the hills? Shall I have only
the grey grapes that hang over the edge of
autumn mornings, and never come upon
those that bleed purple-red life? Shall I
have only the silver fruit that hangs from
the moon's tendrils, and not the luscious
ripening in the tops of living trees?

SONGS OF LONGING

XII

I WILL woo back the beauty that was mine,
the grace that was meant. I will woo
back the sweetness.

I will woo the orioles back to the treetops, and
the martins back to the eaves.

I will come with a lover's persuasion.

I will reclaim the years. I will go back into
the unlighted past and hang a lantern aloft.

I come out of the sins of my unknowing. I
pay with enlightenment.

XIII

UNTIL I have come humbly, I shall know
that I have not come at all.

It is only my little self that is blatant — the
great soul of me is self-obscuring.

There is a robe of sackcloth in my soul, there
is a hempen girdle, and sandals for my
bare feet, and one day I shall wear them,
one day in my great humility.

XIV

I PRAY for my prince. Can a prince know an
ash-girl, save in faery?

In every ash-girl there is a princess, but I must
function from my princess garments and
my crystal slippers, not from my ash-
covered cottons and my ash-girl estate.

It rests with me whether I sit sifting through
the night, or rise up and ride away in the
chariot drawn by the white steeds of my
yearning.

It rests with me when the prince goes calling
eagerly through the land, whether I shall
answer " Yes, here! "

SONGS OF LONGING

XV

O H, Cinderella, where is the vision, where
is the dream?

Do your grimed fingers no longer tremble, nor
your heart beat so fast?

Do your eyes no longer gaze enrapt?

Is it sifting, sifting, ever sifting, with no rose
splotches breaking through?

Has your prince gone by and your heart ceased
to claim him?

Are you inured to the ashes, no longer ravished
by the beauty-thrill?

Do you no longer bind up your hair with silver
ribbons, nor cover your body with the
drapes of gleam?

Do you not pluck the roses from out of the air
and press them to your yearning breast?

Are you eternal scullion? Mate to the swine-
herd? When you lock in the beasts at
night, does not the unclaimed key in your
soul twinge like a sharp steel?

God of my yearning, how deep is the world, and
how shallow is my dipping up!

SONGS OF LONGING

XVI

ONE day I shall know some far-faring,
where the winds blow a warm brown
welcome, where the new and strange is
kind, where life waits to be gentle; where
the songs of the birds wait through my
wandering and my lostness, grown weary
with the waiting, but waiting still.

XVII

SOMEWHERE I lost God out of the day,
God of the mist, and the dream, and
the vision. The birds died, the hills sank
into the sea. God hid his face from me.
By His own law I might not know Him.
But I have invited Him back into my days. I
have spread the best white linen for the
long absent guest. I have gathered honey,
and set great white flowing bowls. I have
polished the floor with sand, and brought
water for the iris at the door.

SONGS OF LONGING

XVIII

I AM the emaciated mother of life, with the
half-starved child of being clinging to
my unresponsive breasts.

I am the Lazarus sores of the ages, but I do not
doubt the arrival of the Christ of Healing.

I am a laborer in the pits, but always there is
the blue sky above me, and the gold stars,
and sometimes a white bird has flown over,
and I have heard the scurrying of the days,
and the hurrying of feet. I have sensed
the soul of the spring and the nearness of
the roses.

Sometimes I have caught a breath like vision
fields, and sometimes a sound like a dream
cadence.

And sometimes an echo has come to me, like
things reverberating from a far distance.

And sometimes I have heard your voice calling
me.

XIX

I WAS not projected here to my ultimate
confusion — that that is true for systems
of worlds is also true for me.

I have my rhythm like the tides and the sea-
sons, I have my fitness.

God did not give a law unto the planets, unto
the ebb and flow of seas, and leave me out.

He did not give the blind mole to burrow, and
leave me without direction or intent.

SONGS OF LONGING

XX

I DO not pray for abundance of stores, but
for an abundance of me. To have the
wealth that healed the leper, that included
the wanton, that walked with the fisher-
men by the sea.

To have so vast a forest, so deep a sun, such
freshets, and such birds that sing and
flowers that blow, that I have no thirst
and no pain of barrenness — there is no
desert consciousness.

XXI

IF God would but receive me as He does the
fledglings!

If I might come all the way proclaiming life —
if not once my faith should falter or fail!

If my days might be like sunlight through
yellow-stained chapel windows!

If I might have an altar where I came in the
holy hush to pray!

If I might have great ponderous tomes of sacred
meaning!

SONGS OF LONGING

XXII

WHAT a god I shall be, once I am truly
human!

I shall come, not as one who has escaped pain,
but as one who has glorified it.

I am on tiptoe, reaching up for something in
the tops of trees.

XXIII

I AM recalling that which I projected.
I am taking down the tents of my being.
I am going into a far country, farther than the
East is from the West — the Land of my
Separate Selves.

SONGS OF LONGING

XXIV

YOU cast me naked into the street — and
I cover myself with laughter.

I spin a fine gold web out of the joy of my
uncaring.

I cover my bare flesh with an all-sufficiency that
knows not demands, with a gladness that
has not impotency or fear.

XXV

HAVE I accomplished one thing in life like
the soft yellow of the meadow-lark's
throat and breast?

Have I created one perfect hour, like the young
dawns of day? Or one evening like the
quiet rising mist on the blue-black hills?

Have I ever prayed a single prayer so deep as
the roses? Or lived one flaming hour like
the poinsettia?

Have I ever had one glorious day like the burst
of a crimson poppy's life? Or one exotic
night heavy with the magnolia's weight of
perfumed being?

Have I ever attained unto a single expression
like the soft grey haze? Or like blue
shadows on waters, when the night-birds
call solemnly from the quiet shores?

SONGS OF LONGING

XXVI

I AM but a mauve mouse of time, but I come
to gnaw the ropes of the ages that bind
me.

I am but a drop of water, but the trickling cen-
turies shall set me free.

I am but a stray shaft of sun, but I fertilize the
soil where I lie dead, I quicken my dust.
I am the resurrection of me.

XXVII

DEEPER than all the seas of the world is
the depth of my thirst.

I plumb their fathoms with the burning of me.
Not depth of sky nor width of horizon has
draught for my insatiable craving.

Not time running in an endless ocean can pour
a quenching bowl to assuage me.

I am the dogs of hell, lapping at a living stream,
Burning with all the fires of all the poor damned
souls of the ages.

XXVIII

SO short the journeying between the craving and the thing — a stone's throw, or an hour's flight of a bird. I will annihilate the narrow margin that lies between me and my unused potency.

The fields are mine, and the fields are joy. The hills are mine, and the hills are gladness. These are mine, if I will but assert them, the bigness of things and the singing spaces.

XXIX

LET me adjust my life, and let me not say
lo, here, nor lo, there, but wherever
truth shall lead me.

I do not ask to dictate the lines — I ask only
to find them.

My confusion is but a phase — and I am not
afraid of phases.

SONGS OF LONGING

XXX

ONCE I thought that deliverance lay in
possessions —

Now I know that it is a feeling that may be
born under the rags of me;

It is a flavor I may find in a crust;

It is a taste in the air.





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